

ingenuity and creative power to make our economy grow; we just need to let them do it.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,

May 25, 1995.

Remarks at the White House Conference on Trade and Investment in Ireland Reception

May 25, 1995

Thank you very much. Let me welcome all of you again and say a special word of welcome to Deputy Prime Minister Spring, Sir Patrick Mayhew, Ambassador Gallagher, Ambassador Renwick, Ambassador Crowe, Ambassador Smith, to Senator Mitchell, to the people who are here from the International Fund for Ireland. Let me say a special word of thanks to the Chairman, Willie McCarter, and to my good friend and appointee Jim Lyons. And let me remind all of you that, appropriately enough, the band that just entertained us is known as Celtic Thunder. We arranged the Irish weather here tonight—[laughter]—to remind you that we are all here under a very large tent in more ways than one.

If yesterday and today all of us have done what we set out to do, then we will all be sharing the same hopes and joining the same work for the future of Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. We are especially committed to the economic revival of the people who live there, all of the people who live there.

We know that many people will be skeptical about the possibilities of peace and others will be skeptical about the possibilities of economic progress. George Bernard Shaw once recognized that skepticism about economic matters dies hard, and since he had a foot in Ireland and a foot in England, I thought I would remind you of what he said. He said, "If you lined up end to end all the economists in the world, you still would not reach a conclusion." [Laughter] I think today even Mr. Shaw would share our optimism.

I hope that this conference stirred your thoughts and your imagination for the future, that you have had an opportunity to exchange ideas and plans, that you will act on the things that you have thought about and dreamed about here. The people who are gathered here have the opportunity to make all your ideals real.

We in government can make a difference in political negotiations as the first bridge between groups that history has separated. We can be a catalyst for change. But sustained progress will require more. It demands the engagements of all the major groups within society, the companies that provide the economic lifeblood, the churches, the political parties, the civic associations.

Already there has been tremendous progress. We can see that in the desire for peace that runs throughout Northern Ireland and—let me emphasize this—in the work of the 200 community and civic leaders who traveled here at their own great expense to advance the cause of reconciliation. We thank them especially for being here. These men and women are on the frontlines bringing down the barricades, bringing together the people of the Shankill and the people of the Falls.

I want to thank, as well, the Irish-American community, the business community, and the nongovernmental organizations. You have risen to the task. Now let me say that, as I thank you—is the sound off? That's good, because I'm almost through. [Laughter]

I asked you here tonight mostly to celebrate and not to hear another speech. I ask you to remember that the United States is always with you.

Just behind me here, through the—you can almost see them, even through the plastic cover—are the two oldest trees at the White House, two grand magnolias planted over 165 years ago by Andrew Jackson, the son of an immigrant farmer from the Carrickfergus in County Antrim. Every day I look at those two old trees and think about our Nation's past and our Nation's future. Today I will look at them with fresh eyes to think about Ireland's past and Ireland's future, the future of the people of Northern Ireland and the people of Ireland.

Thank you all. Good luck. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:19 p.m. on the South Grounds at the White House.

Remarks at a Meeting With Surgeon General Nominee Henry Foster and an Exchange With Reporters

May 26, 1995

The President. I want to thank the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee for endorsing the nomination of Dr. Foster to be Surgeon General and for doing it in a bipartisan fashion. I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation to the people of Tennessee who stood with him and especially to the young children in the "I Have A Future" program who came up here and talked about how he helped to turn their lives around, helped to convince them to stay in school, to keep working, to turn away from drugs, from teen pregnancy, from the other problems that bother so many of our children.

This is a good day for the United States, and I look forward to going on to the next stage and to working right through until we get Dr. Foster confirmed.

Q. Mr. President, what are you going to do if the—

The President. I would like for Dr. Foster to say something, too.

Dr. Foster. I, too, would like to thank the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee for a fair hearing and for moving this forward to the full Senate. I also particularly want to thank the person on that committee who knew me best, Senator William Frist, for supporting my nomination. And lastly, I want to thank the President, his administration, congressional Members, and my family for supporting me so stoutly during these times.

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, what are you going to do if the U.N. peacekeepers are harmed in Bosnia by the Serbs? They have threatened to retaliate on the bombing.

The President. We'll have to examine their actions as they take them. The United States is in a—I want to make clear the position we're in here. We, as a part of and a leader of NATO, responded to the request of the United Nations,

which I thought was very appropriate, to deal with the shelling of Sarajevo and the shelling of civilians by the Bosnian Serbs, in clear violation of the understandings that have been in place for quite some time now. And we did that in an appropriate way against military targets, so that the taking of hostages as well as the killing of civilians by them is totally wrong and inappropriate, and it should stop.

The United Nations, the forces on the ground and the United Nations Command obviously will have to analyze these circumstances on a daily basis. We will work with them, and we'll do whatever is appropriate. And I still believe that the action we took was appropriate. It was in response to the request from the U.N., and it certainly was provoked by the inappropriate shelling of civilians by the Bosnian Serbs.

Q. Do you have a backup plan if something happens? You're sending an aircraft carrier to the Adriatic. Does that have a—

The President. I can't comment any further on what's going on now. I think it's important for the United Nations, who have the forces on the ground, to be able to deal with this situation. And as the events unfold, I'll be happy to comment.

China

Q. Mr. President, why are you giving China MFN again, sir?

The President. Well, I haven't made a decision on that yet. But as you know, I said last year—and I believe—that we should continue to press China on the human rights issues, but I don't believe that singling China out on the MFN is necessarily the best way to do it. There are other countries with whom we have human rights differences as well. And we have certainly pressed our differences with China, not only person-to-person, face-to-face with the Chinese but also in the appropriate international forum, and we will continue to do that.